

NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6116
RICHARD KILIAN/GENEVA

AUGUST 31, 1978

DISARMAMENT

ANNCR:

AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE, THE LONGEST RUNNING UNITED NATIONS-SPONSORED CONFERENCE, HAS MET FOR THE LAST TIME IN ITS PRESENT FORM. RICHARD KILIAN IN GENEVA HAS A BACKGROUND REPORT ON ITS PAST AND TAKES A LOOK AT ITS FUTURE.

VOICE:

EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY DURING WINTER, SPRING AND SUMMER SESSIONS AT THE THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE USUALLY LONG AND OFTEN COMPLEX SPEECHES ARE MADE. REPORTERS AND ANALYSTS STUDY EVERY WORD FOR HINTS OF SUBTLE CHANGES IN POSITIONS ON DISARMAMENT.

THIS THURSDAY'S (8/31) SESSION...THE EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTH... IS BEING CALLED BY DELEGATES THE END OF THE BEGINNING. AND SOME DELEGATES HOPE IT IS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR THE BODY.

THE NEXT SESSION IN JANUARY WILL SEE THE MEMBERSHIP ENLARGED FROM THE PRESENT THIRTY-ONE ONE TO A MAXIMUM OF FORTY. AND THE CHAIRMANSHIP, WHICH HAS BEEN HELD ALTERNATIVELY BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, WILL ROTATE AMONG ALL MEMBERS. BUT MORE IMPORTANT WILL BE THE PRESENCE OF FRANCE AND, IT IS HOPED, AT A LATER DATE, CHINA -- THE TWO NUCLEAR POWERS MISSING FROM THESE NEGOTIATIONS. FRANCE NEVER OCCUPIED ITS SEAT ON THE COMMITTEE. THE NEW STRUCTURE, WHICH IS PARTLY OF HER MAKING, IS BRINGING FRANCE INTO THE DISARMAMENT PICTURE.

AMERICAN DELEGATE ADRIAN FISCHER POINTED OUT THURSDAY THAT THE OFTEN-CRITICIZED COMMITTEE HAD DONE MUCH GOOD WORK. HE

MENTIONED THE TREATY BANNING NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE ATMOSPHERE, OUTER SPACE AND UNDERWATER; THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY; THE SEA BED ARMS CONTROL TREATY AND THE TWO TREATIES BANNING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS AND THE USE OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

THE COMMITTEE WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED THE EIGHTEEN NATION DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE. ITS UNIQUE FEATURE WAS THE PARTICIPATION OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES...THE FIRST TIME THEY HAD A REGULAR OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS TO THE GREAT POWERS.

FOLLOWING INITIAL INTERNATIONAL EXCITEMENT, THE COMMITTEE GRADUALLY SETTLED INTO ITS WORK, IN RECENT YEARS IT BECAME A ROUTINE FEATURE LIKE ANY ONGOING INTERNATIONAL EVENT. MORE DIFFICULT ISSUES HAVE HAD TO BE HAMMERED OUT BETWEEN THE SUPER-POWERS AND THEN SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR ITS COMMENTS AND APPROVAL.

THAT IS WHAT IS NOW HAPPENING ON A PROPOSED TREATY TO OUTLAW ALL NUCLEAR TESTING AND ANOTHER TO BAN THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS. IN FACT, THE COMPLETE BAN ON NUCLEAR TESTS IS EXPECTED TO BE THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT TREATY THE NEW DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE WILL PRODUCE.

GH/RCS